

From: Elizabeth Anth <elizabethanth@wsdr4.org>
To: KERI SKEETERS <keriskeeters@wsdr4.org>
Subject: Banned books
Date: February 3, 2022 at 10:49:55 AM CST

Good morning, Keri.

I'm guessing you may have received this too, but I wanted to pass along to you. I haven't responded to her.

Happy Snow Day!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Janene Sparks** <janenesparksdo@icloud.com>
Date: Thu, Feb 3, 2022 at 9:13 AM
Subject: Banned books
To: <elizabethanth@wsdr4.org>

Good morning. I am emailing you today to discuss some concerns I have regarding recent banned and weeded books from the libraries in the Wentzville School District. Over the past few weeks, it has come to my attention that The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison has been banned and 2 other books are up for review; Lawn Boy and Gabi, A Girl in Pieces. I have also found out that three other books have been "weeded" from the Wentzville School District libraries; All Boys Aren't Blue, Fun Home, and Heavy. I have several concerns regarding this. First of all, it is striking to me that at least 5 out of these 6 books deal with either LGBTQI subject matter or are stories of the experiences of African Americans. I understand that The Bluest Eye was challenged, and therefore a committee was formed to review the book, and in turn was given the task to give the board recommendations as to whether to keep the book or remove it from libraries. Despite the committee voting to keep the book, the board members voted to remove it. I understand that the board has the final say, but why form the committee in the first place if the board members are not going to follow their recommendations. It seems the committee was formed only to give the appearance that the WSD is considering these books in good faith and not just banning them on personal preference of the board members. I watched the board meeting in which the vote took place, and I was struck by one member who stated "the book offended ME, therefore I want it banned". These were not her exact words but that was in essence what she was saying. I am very disappointed in a board member who cannot look outside of her own experiences and think that maybe others have differing opinions on what's offensive. I would hope the

board members understand the power that they wield and would do their best to vote in the best interest of ALL students in the district, including those that identify as LGBTQI and/or are African American.

My last point and probably the most concerning to me is the weeding of the three books mentioned earlier. I reached out to Brynne Cramer about this, and she directed me to Wentzville School District Policy 6310. This policy states specifically that in order for a book to be weeded it must be damaged beyond repair, outdated, or unreliable. Please explain to me how these three books fit these criteria, and if they don't fit these criteria why were they pulled from the shelves without an official challenge. Also, if they don't fit these criteria, I feel strongly that they should be put back on the shelves and at that point, if a parent submits an official challenge then they can go through the committee and voting process.

Lastly, I would be very interested in being considered for future committees for the currently challenged books.

Thank you in advance for considering my concerns,
Janene Sparks

*Beth Anth
Administrative Assistant
Teaching & Learning
Wentzville School District
636-327-3800 ext. 20110*